

Anarchism - 6599

THE COMING REVOLUTION



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Gift

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When men shall have discovered the proper functions of human energy and the way to apply it to free and social living, we shall not be slow to adopt their invention, whether it passes our comprehension or not.

It is always enough that a few find the best path—forthwith the world follows.

We do not want more education or books or legislation.

We have too much education, too many books, too many laws already.

We need only, here and there, a leader to discover and apply God's laws of social industry, and we will throng after them; not one of us will be left behind.

And who will lead the way?

The good and wise must lead.

He that loves most is the best and wisest and he it is that leads already.

Where the best lover sits is always the head of the table.

Tell the great secret to the people.

Let the people love and they will lead.

No cunning device of ballot-machinery can give them the power.

No system of common-schools, spending its energies on mind alone, can give them the power.

No campaign against monopoly and oppression, however it may promise to succeed, can give them the power.

Nay, but let the people love, and theirs is the power!

—Ernest Crosby.

INTRODUCTION

It is characteristic of man that when he comes to see what he believes to be a greater truth relative to any branch of social life, he feels the urge and desire to proclaim it and make it part of public opinion. In obedience to this urge and desire, I present the ideas embodied in this pamphlet for the consideration of my fellow-men.

These chapters on The Coming Revolution have already appeared in THE MEDIATOR MAGAZINE as part of a series under the heading "Revolution." They are now issued in pamphlet form in the hope of reaching still more of that sprinkling of men who give thought to social problems and are especially fitted to act as pioneers in social progress—men who are keenly conscious of the urge towards a higher social order and are eagerly looking for a principle of association that will make possible that harmony in human relations it is man's nature to constantly strive to attain.

The Coming Revolution is not issued as a business venture. Therefore no price is attached.

With the expectation of stimulating thought and bringing out intelligent criticism I will, on request, send this pamphlet to any address.

W. T. Bethune, Chardon, Ohio.

January, 1918.

The Coming Revolution

IN the evolution of social bodies great dissatisfaction with existing conditions, discontent and general unrest always precedes those periods of quick and radical readjustment in human relations we call revolutions. These conditions exist with us today.

As I interpret the signs of our times a fundamental revolution is now developing that will herald in the third great epoch in human destiny.

The first momentous event in social evolution was when the perfected social unit, man, was evolved from animal life. For men are to the social body what the life cells are to the animal body. They are perfect social units in the sense that, like the life units (cells) whose different groupings make up all vegetable and animal organisms, there is no indication of any change in their individual powers and attributes since they first appeared.

When primitive men herded together they had the personal, animal conception of life. Like the sheep and the wolves, they herded together for mutual aid in living their individual, personal lives.

Within the herd or pack the members recognize no law but might; they coerce each other as the right of might. The physically strongest and most cunning do not hesitate to assert their might in pushing aside their weaker fellows and appropriating to themselves the best means of supplying their physical wants. With primitive men the controlling principle in their herd association was the gratification of their personal, animal desires. They knew no law but might.

The second great epoch in human destiny was the birth of social consciousness with man in his group relations. It is this that differentiates man from the brute and distinguishes organic societary life from mere animal association in herds, packs or flocks. Social consciousness is the vitalizing principle in organic society, something akin to the mysterious principle that vitalizes vegetable and animal life. It is the realization by men, through their reasoning faculty, that in their group relations they are all part of a common life; that they are bound together in a common destiny which it is the law of their nature to co-operate with each other in fulfilling.

With social consciousness man became a dual personality—an animal plus a social unit. Then came to man a dawning recognition of a law of social life to which the brute law of might is subordinate. Then began the great human struggle of the ages; the struggle of the social life current ("spirit")—common to all men who have attained to social consciousness—to overcome the obstructions that keep it from freely flowing through the whole social body, obstructions that are raised by man's animal desires. This is the struggle of the god in man for supre-

macy over the brute in man, not to kill personal, animal desires, but to subordinate them to his rational consciousness. And the evolution of society, with its changing mass conceptions and revolutions, marks the progress of the struggle towards a successful issue.

With social consciousness, men, in order to live a rational co-operative life, must also have a conception of what is their common destiny. That is, they must have a common conception of the meaning of their life. This fundamental mass conception has, as yet, always been a belief that the meaning of man's life is to fulfill the will of a superior social Intelligence as made known to him through some intermediate.

The numerous revolutions that have marked the evolution of society from the savage tribe to the civilized nation, have all rested on this one fundamental mass conception. They have all been readjustments by men, in their social relations, in obedience to supposed changes in the will of an accepted superior Intelligence outside of man, as made known through some specially chosen and popularly accepted agent—some sacred person, institution or thing acting as an intermediate between the accepted superior Intelligence and the masses of men.

But the coming revolution does not belong in the same class.

To me the coming revolution marks the decay of the old and the ripening of a new fundamental mass conception of the meaning of life—the third great epoch in human destiny.

The coming revolution will be epoch-making, for it is developing around an idea that embodies a denial of the basic concept underlying social life and all revolutions in the past. It will mark the ripening, into a fundamental mass conception, of an idea that, through a fuller recognition of the law of reason, has been spreading amongst men since the time of Christ.

The idea around which the coming revolution is developing is a belief that the meaning of our life is to attain to perfect social unity in human relations; and that we can only fulfill this, our common destiny, through free self-expression—the expression in action of the social intelligence peculiar to and inherent in each individual. This we may aptly call the Organic conception of life, for it defines society as a growing organism, with the forces and intelligence that make for organic evolution and final perfect social unity as inherent in the social life units, men.

In contradistinction to the Organic conception we may appropriately call the present mass conception of life the Architectural conception, for it postulates the existence and need of an Intelligence outside of and superior to man that, through some chosen agent, directs and controls human association in accordance with Its will.

In obedience to the impulse that urges him to fulfill the law of his nature, man, in his societary life, has generated new conceptions of the nature and will of this superior Intelligence, this social Architect. And with these changing conceptions ripening into revolution after revolution,

man has been bringing the source of social intelligence nearer and nearer to himself—he has been coming nearer and nearer to the Organic conception.

I believe that what Christ lived and taught embodies the fullest and clearest expression of the organic conception of life that has yet appeared in the world. It was the teaching and example of this great pioneer in the field of rational self-expression that turned attention to man as the possible source of social intelligence. That we should expect to find God in man logically follows from his teaching that "the Kingdom of God is within you."

Since the time of Christ we have progressed from a belief in outside, invisible, personal gods as the source of social intelligence—personal gods making known their will to men through certain individuals acting as their personal agents—to the present day popular belief that a superior social Intelligence is generated from the whole body of the people and makes known Its will to men through the man-made institution we call the State.

In popular thought the superior Intelligence whose will it is our destiny to fulfill is a mass intelligence—the combined social intelligence of all the people. This popular conception rests on the assumption that men, in the mass, generate a social intelligence superior to that of any individual or group, that social intelligence, like physical power, increases with the increase in number of human units. It is further popularly believed that men, as individuals, are dominated by anti-social desires, that if they were not restrained by a superior social Intelligence society would be disrupted by fierce, animal conflicts between men.

In popular thought this superior Intelligence, supposed to be generated by society, finds expression through the actions of Its agent, the State. "Society" is supposed to instruct its agent through the ballot-box oracle—the peculiar rite or ceremony participated in by a particular class of persons called voters who, by manipulating certain mechanical contrivances, are supposed to ascertain what is the will of "Society."

Then, in public opinion today, social intelligence inheres in men—men in the mass.

Logically, the next step towards the Organic mass conception is a realization by an "intelligent minority" that intelligence cannot be increased by increasing the number of units to whom this quality attaches, that men in the mass cannot possibly give rise to an intelligence superior to that of the individual. This step has already been taken.

The men who have made this step see clearly that the popularly accepted impersonal, superior Intelligence supposed to be generated from the whole body of the people, is a delusion, an image in the mind, an imaginary divinity outside of man, just as much as the personal gods of the Greeks and the Romans. With the recognition of this fact the man-made institution we call the State, with its mechanical ballot-box oracle, becomes akin to the organization of pagan priests with their rock-bound oracle at Delphi.

Men who can no longer accept the popular conception of the meaning of life, must either conceive of a higher meaning—a meaning that satisfies their reason—or lose social consciousness and revert to the primitive, personal conception. The Organic conception fills this need. It satisfied man's rational nature in that it squares with the law of reason as far as that law has yet been unfolded to man.

Never before in human history has there developed such a questioning of the fundamental mass conception as exists with us today. Social evolution has heretofore registered changing deductions from the one fundamental principle, that the meaning of our life is to fulfill the will of a superior social Intelligence outside of man, as made known to him through some intermediate. Only here and there, widely separated in space and time, has the Organic conception found expression in individual action—a conception that denies the need of an intermediate and affirms the existence of a social life current ("spirit") common to us all which, by reason of our unique personalities, is made manifest in a different way in each individual, but never in opposition.

Not until this new conception ripened in the commanding personality of Christ did it succeed in striking its roots deep enough into human consciousness as to insure a continuous growth. Since the time of the great Deliverer the number of men, who, through reason, have discarded the Architectural mass belief and accepted the Organic conception, has steadily increased. And it is this sprinkling of men who have thought out and accepted the new conception of life, that act as centres from which radiate a contagion of feeling and action that I believe is destined to spread with ever increasing rapidity until, the different areas of contagion merging into each other, the inertia of the present order will be overcome. Then the great epoch-making revolution will be upon us.

BESIDES being fundamental, the revolution now developing around the Organic conception of life will also differ from all former revolutions in that it will be peaceful.

The revolutions of the past, resting on the Architectural conception, have all been characterized by bitter political conflicts, often culminating in civil war. These conflicts always arose from disputes over who was the legitimate agent of the generally accepted superior Intelligence, or over what was the true interpretation of Its will. For thousands of years the brute-man has enslaved the god-man by masquerading as the agent of an imagined superior Intelligence. Millions upon millions of human lives have been sacrificed on the altar of Authority—sacrificed by men who labored under the delusion that being able to conquer opposition was proof of the legitimacy of their claim to be the chosen agents of a generally accepted superior Intelligence. Thus, through the ages, men have shifted responsibility for coercing each other upon an imaginary superior Authority outside of themselves. In Christendom today the ruling classes, while believing they are serving

Society, are in reality serving themselves—in the name of Society using the machinery of the State to exploit their fellow-men for their personal gratification.

His social instincts perverted by the false Architectural conception of the meaning of life, man's higher impulse to give himself in social service is turned to outstripping his fellows in gaining favor with Society, favor expressed in terms of legal property. Invidious comparison arrays class against class and individual against individual in bitter political and business conflicts, conflicts that reach their greatest fierceness in revolutions that develop around new deductions from the basic Architectural mass conception.

The Organic conception of life supplies no basis for invidious comparison nor for coercion in the name of a superior Authority. He who accepts this conception recognizes that every individual in the social body is unique in that the attributes common to all are differently balanced in each; that by reason of this difference in balance social instincts find expression in a way peculiar to each individual but never in opposition; that each social unit (man) is better fitted than any other to function in a certain way in our co-operative social life; and that the rational consciousness inherent in each individual is the only true guide and director of his social actions. Having no general standard of action by which to measure social service there can be no invidious comparison along this line between men who accept the Organic idea. And each individual, feeling that he is of equal importance with all others in social life, instead of conforming his social activities to a common standard resting on the false Architectural conception, will turn to giving free expression in action to the social intelligence peculiar to himself.

Recognizing no superior Authority and accepting personal responsibility for their actions, socially conscious men will refrain from taking part, either as individuals or groups, in coercing their fellows. For to men who accept the Organic conception of life, Love is the ruling factor in human association. Just as believers in the present day false Architectural conception accept the supposed will of the imaginary divinity, Society, as a higher law than the personal brute law of might, so do believers in the Organic conception accept Love as a higher law than the will of Society. And as men of the Architectural belief do not coerce each other except in the name of Society, so men of the Organic belief will not do anything in the name of Society that does not accord with love.

I call particular attention to the fact that to accept and conform to the Organic conception of life does not necessitate a new class of actions. It only means that we must refrain from certain actions we now do that are contrary to love. We do not need to labor and build up love. We have only to refrain from putting obstructions in its way and it will develop spontaneously.

What we must refrain from doing in order that love may grow and dominate social life is made plain in the teachings of Christ. His teachings are largely negative and centre around the precept, "Love your

neighbor as yourself," that is, recognize yourself in your fellow-men and love all as parts of a common life. From the law of love Christ drew the negative commandments he gave as a guide to his disciples. The most important of them is the commandment, "Resist not evil," that is, do not use force against those men whose actions are considered evil. All the other negative commandments are secondary to this, for to be able to fully keep them, we must first refrain from using violence towards our fellows, either in resisting what we consider their evil actions or in forcing them to act as we desire.

His attaching so much importance to the principle of non-resistance proves that Christ clearly saw what is becoming obvious to thinking men today, i. e., that there cannot possibly be, for men, an external and generally applicable indicator of what is evil. Hence His injunction not to pass judgment upon others, ("judge not that you be not judged") and to do unto others as you would have them do to you, is simply to conform our social life to the law of love as the only rational and satisfying course of action open to socially conscious men.

The law of love does not emanate from an outside Authority as does the will of Society. Love is not an entity, neither a personal nor an impersonal divinity. Love is an emotion, a feeling, a mental condition in which men see themselves reflected in their fellow-men and, having the desire that all should be well with themselves, feel the impulse to serve themselves through serving others—they love their neighbors as themselves.

Recognizing no superior Authority, and accepting love as the ruling principle in human association—as the catalytic agent that must be present in the evolution of social life—men of the Organic belief will cultivate an attitude of love. They will try to refrain from the common habit of breaking the law of love through taking part in legal coercion—by holding legal titles to property, or by voting, acting as policemen, judges, jailers, soldiers, legislators or other State officials. Nor will they resist being coerced in the name of Society—in being jailed and persecuted as undesirable citizens.

Beginning with an intelligent minority who accept and conform their actions to the Organic conception of life as the highest expression of the law of reason in human association, this idea will spread amongst the masses by contagion of feeling and action. The peaceful revolution will develop through people coming to realize more and more what not to do. Men do not need to be taught to love, they love instinctively. They need to learn what it is they now do that restricts and perverts the impulse to love which is present in every human soul. Nor is it necessary that the masses of men should reason out what not to do. This is done by the intelligent minority who act as nuclei for contagion by example.

The intelligent minority is that sprinkling of individuals who give thought to social problems and are peculiarly fitted to initiate those changes in the different branches of our co-operative life which, taken

together, give rise to those progressive changes in the social body as a whole we call the evolution of society.

In the factories, the workshops and on the farms the great masses of co-operating workers unquestioningly conform their activities to a generally accepted conception of the laws of mechanics and of plant growth. In our larger all-inclusive political order, the masses conform to the generally accepted conception of the meaning of life. And it is the general acceptance of these working standards that makes possible a high degree of industrial and political co-operation. Yet mass conceptions are subject to change; changes that bring with them those radical and swift readjustments in human association we call revolution.

These changes get their initial impulse from this sprinkling of restless, inquiring men scattered here and there through the social body. Keenly conscious of the urge towards a higher social order, these men try to still further unfold the law of reason, and through this larger reason to develop a truer conception of the laws of the material world and of the meaning of our life. These industrial and political innovators, in their efforts to introduce a new plan of co-operative action, disturb the harmony of the existing order. In the shops and on the farms they are looked upon as dreamers, putterers, and inefficient workmen. In political life they are denounced as cranks, agitators, demagogues and undesirable citizens. Yet, such is the urge of their nature, they never cease from experimenting and trying out new ideas. And when, through the labors of these inquiring minds, a greater truth is evolved and finds expression in their actions, such is the power of truth in action that it at once commands attention. Other inquiring men accept the new idea through reason. But the masses follow the example of the intelligent minority through contagion of feeling and action. Without stopping to reason things out they discard the old and adopt new modes of action because they see better results. Spreading faster and faster as the areas of contagion grow larger, a greater truth soon ripens into revolution, absorbing what truth there is in the old and becoming the new mass conception. And the dreamers, the cranks and the agitators of today come to be looked upon as geniuses and patriots by the next generation.

A striking example of the rapid growth of a greater truth by contagion of action is supplied in the field of mechanics by the development of the automobile. A few years ago an intelligent minority thought out and put in practice this new idea in mechanics, and spreading by contagion of action the result is that today automobiles are in general use, although the great mass of the users have little understanding of the mechanical principles on which they operate. Men see results and follow examples. And so of the Organic conception of life.

When a sprinkling of men, through reason, come to accept Love as the law of human association and realize that certain actions, popularly looked upon as perfectly legitimate, are what keeps love from dominating human intercourse they will desire to refrain from such actions. And while habits of life they have already acquired may make it impossible

for them to square all their actions to the new conception, they will refrain as much as they can from doing what does not accord with love. Having rid themselves of the delusion of outside Authority which leads men to expend their energies as "reformers"—in trying to coerce others into conforming to the "right" social order—they will endeavor to reform themselves. Realizing that men cannot be coerced into accepting love as the law of social life and that social harmony can only come through each individual refraining from actions that now pervert and restrict the inherent tendency for love to develop in men, their energies will be directed to conquering their own evil habits—habits that develop through the dominance of the bestial personality. Every desire to act contrary to love they succeed in conquering will give them strength to go still farther. They will succeed more and more in subordinating their bestial personal desires to their rational consciousness, an Authority that cannot be disputed. In proportion as they conform to the Organic conception of life, which affirms love as the law of human association, in like proportion will they live more completely. They will radiate love and other men will profit by their example; they, too, will try to conquer evil habits of life in order to experience the joy and gladness that come where love expands. Thus the Organic conception will spread with ever increasing rapidity until it ripens into a peaceful revolution and becomes the mass conception of the meaning of life—the uniting principle in human association.

TO me the strongest possible proof that the Organic conception of life is more in accord with the law of man's nature than the present Architectural mass conception, is the fact that the individual who tries to conform his social actions to this conception becomes conscious of living a fuller and more satisfying life in proportion as he obeys the law of love. And this irrespective of whether few or many follow his example.

The present-day believers in Society, the State and the Ballot Box oracle, who take part in "reform" movements, confine their activities to changing the will of Society, to getting a majority vote for their new idea. Not until this is accomplished will they conform their actions to what they consider a better social order. They subordinate their own rational consciousness to the supposed will of an imaginary divinity (Society), as made known to them through its agent, the State. Thus the expression in action of the social intelligence peculiar to each individual, which the law of his nature demands, is restricted and perverted to meet artificial and generally applied rules of conduct formulated by the State, and men feel that life is dwarfed and incomplete.

He who accepts the Organic conception is not shackled by the delusion of outside authority. To him love, which he feels within himself, is the law of organic social life, and his own rational consciousness the true director of his social activities. Through reason he recognizes the actions that conflict with love and, accepting personal responsibility, he

refrains from such actions. He thus removes the obstructions that retard the flow of the social life current and at once experiences the joy and gladness that come with more abundant life. He does not wait until he gets the sanction of Society. He acts on his own initiative and lives more completely—here and now.

There are indications that we in America will be the first people to develop the Organic idea into a mass conception and to use it as a working principle in shaping our social order. And logically so. For this land has been the haven to which has flocked the restless, discontented element from other countries in the hope of finding liberty and a fuller life. Here the possibilities of the Architectural conception have been most fully tested out. And the result is so unsatisfying that today a high fever of unrest and dissatisfaction with social conditions pervades the whole social body. Men are even questioning the soundness of the principle on which our democracy rests. All that is needed to generate revolution is a new idea, embodying a greater truth as to the law of social life, to unite the forces of discontent for common action. The Organic conception of life fills this need. And already this new idea is finding expression in the action of a few men who have reasoned out and accepted this greater truth.

More especially do I look to the men who are popularly accepted as superior persons, our so-called successful men, to take the initiative in conforming to the Organic conception of life. For it is these men who realize most acutely that under the present Architectural mass conception it is impossible to give full play to the social life forces they feel within them and that demand expression in action. These successful men are nearest the goal for which we are all striving. They enjoy the highest degree of favor with Society, favor expressed in legal property. The successful man has the wealth and power that in popular thought insures to him the most complete life. Yet in reality, instead of being united more intimately with the common life as his wealth and power increase, the more terribly alone he feels. The invidious comparison which springs out of the Architectural conception separates a man from his fellows in proportion as he outstrips them in gaining favor with Society.

Having exhausted the possibilities of the Architectural belief and found the fruits of wealth and power so bitterly disappointing, these favorites of Society make the most promising field for the growth of the Organic conception of life. They have no longer the hope of enjoying more abundant life through gaining more favor with Society, a hope that still makes the Architectural conception acceptable with the masses. Feeling the urge to fulfill the law of their nature many of our successful men are looking for a larger outlet for their social instincts than is supplied by the present mass conception of the meaning of life. To make life tolerable to them they must find a larger outlet or else revert to the primitive personal conception of life. Already our richest men are turning to giving instead of getting wealth in the hope of establishing that intimate connection with the common life which their nature craves. But,

still hampered by a false conception of life, they find only a bastard joy in giving. For they give only of their abundant wealth while the law of life demands that they give of themselves.

I confidently believe that in the near future many of our successful men will, through reason, rid themselves of the delusion of Society and accept the Organic conception of life. Then they will recognize the evil in invidious comparison and accept each individual as an equally essential part of the common life. They will see themselves reflected in their neighbor, and, rejoicing in the recognition, they will gladly give, not only their wealth, but themselves, even their life, that the common life current may flow more freely. Instead of giving as superior persons they will give because they love, and loving their neighbor as themselves they will be more blessed in giving than in getting.

We can readily see that if a few of our most successful men, our Rockefellers, Carnegies and Fords, proclaimed their acceptance of the Organic conception of life, they would do a great work towards calling public attention to this new idea; more especially if they were able to conquer evil habits of life peculiar to our present social order and refrain from actions, now popularly accepted as legitimate, that keep love from dominating human association. And as it is their supposed superiority that separates them from the common life, and the popular measure of superiority is legal property, to refrain as much as they can from holding legal property or other "rights" granted by the State as the agent of the imaginary divinity Society is logically the first step they will take in squaring their actions to the Organic conception of life. A Henry Ford dominated by love and recognizing that the present day successful man is he who takes the greatest share out of the common stock in proportion to what he puts in, will give in an entirely different spirit from a Henry Ford the mainspring of whose actions is to gain favor with Society. Instead of giving as a superior person regulating and protecting the lives of inferiors, he will give his wealth in a spirit of restitution, as one who repents for having sinned while laboring under a delusion. Confession is indeed good for the soul. This confession by action will unite him closer with the common life, and love will expand and give him strength to still further conform to the Organic conception. He will enter into a new life, made manifest in his changed personality as being fuller and more satisfying than the old. And when men ask what has transfigured him he can truly say he has been born again.

In this way do I expect an intelligent minority of our so-called successful men to give expression in action to the Organic conception of life. Others will follow their example. And separating themselves from the predatory features of Big Business, now sanctioned by Authority, will expend their energies in social service. Instead of measuring success in terms of legal property, a standard that necessarily separates men into superior and inferior classes, the pioneers in this new movement will measure success in terms of self-expression. And as every individual has a mode of expression peculiar to himself there is no room for

invidious comparison. Everyone can be equally successful, for he and he alone is best fitted to play a particular part in our co-operative life.

While to the believer in Society his social activities are a means to an end—the means by which he gains favor with Society—to the man of Organic belief his activities are his particular contribution to the common life. His actions are dominated by love and his recompense is in the joy of doing—in adding to the common life. Therefore each individual who frees himself from the delusion of Society worship, with love as his mentor, will eagerly turn to that line of work which he feels will give the fullest expression to his social impulses. Instead of engaging in the predatory occupations today sanctioned by Authority, and struggling, wolf-like, for possession of the common product—not to consume it but that they may “save” it for “investment” and thus gain favor with Society—instead of sacrificing each other on the altar of Authority, men of the Organic belief will respond to the true law of their nature, each freely giving himself in social service—losing his personal life in the common life current and thus gaining everlasting life. Jesus had this in mind when he said “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it.”

Aided by the compelling force of a greater truth illustrated in action, the pioneers in rational self-expression will be able to prove to others that the Kingdom of Heaven is within men, and that love is the medium that will unite all in a common life. And with these men acting as centres of contagion, the Organic conception will spread with ever increasing rapidity until it ripens into a peaceful revolution and becomes the new mass conception of the meaning of life. Then, having overcome the delusion of outside Authority—the last strong-hold of the brute in man—the god in man will be supreme; love will be free to expand and dominate human association; and men will fulfill the law of their being. They will attain to perfect organic unity as a social body and thus realize the kingdom of heaven on earth.

FINIS.

